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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 002108

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: TIGERS' TNA PROXIES BLAME GOVERNMENT AND
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR LACK OF PROGRESS ON PEACE

REF: A. COLOMBO 2058

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 1656

Classified By: DCM JAMES F. ENTWISTLE. Reason 1.4 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In a December 15 meeting with pro-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarians, the Ambassador stressed U.S. and international concern at the escalation of violence following the November 17 election. The TNA MPs were quick to deny LTTE involvement in cease-fire violations, harped on Government non-compliance with the Cease-fire Agreement (CFA) by allowing breakaway LTTE leader Karuna to operate in the East, and insisted that Norway remain involved in the peace process. The LTTE, the TNA claimed, is still waiting for a "positive sign" from the government. Noting the LTTE call for Rajapaksa to be pragmatic, the Ambassador suggested the TNA show a little pragmatism itself by initiating contact with President Rajapaksa. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On December 15 pro-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MPs R. Sampanthan, Gajendra Kumar Ponnambalam and Joseph Pararajasingham called on the Ambassador and DCM to exchange views before the December 19 co-chairs' meeting in Brussels. The Ambassador expressed grave concern at recent attacks on Sri Lankan military forces in Jaffna (Ref A). He pointed out that a recent attack destroyed a humanitarian de-mining vehicle donated by the US. Sampanthan replied that, as usual, the blame is assigned to the LTTE though recent discoveries "prove" that (other) paramilitaries, with government collusion, are involved. The TNA members referred to an article recently appearing on TamilNet and other Tamil sources reporting an interview with two alleged prisoners from the breakaway Karuna faction. The defectors claimed that Karuna's cadres, with the assistance of the anti-LTTE Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) and Social Affairs Minister Douglas Devananda, have been instigating violence between Muslim and Tamil communities in the East, as well as cease-fire violations including several claymore mine attacks, in order to discredit the LTTE. The Ambassador expressed doubt over the credibility of such accounts, as well as Sampanthan's assertion that the LTTE had not been involved in the December 14 shooting at a Sri Lanka Air Force helicopter.

[1](#)3. (C) Recent aggressive actions and the LTTE-enforced boycott of the November 17 election, the Ambassador stressed, raise grave doubts among the international community about the LTTE's commitment to the peace process. Sampanthan insisted that though the Tigers had "recommended" Tamils not vote in the Presidential election in order to prove to the international community that the majority Sinhalese would not support a federal solution or devolution of power in the North and East, Tamils had exercised free will in choosing not to vote. The Ambassador replied that the LTTE had clearly suppressed the Tamil vote and expressed concern that the LTTE is rejecting international involvement in the peace process. He stressed that the international community may lose interest and aid money dry up if the LTTE and the government do not move to resume the peace process soon. The international community has made it clear it understands there are legitimate historical Tamil grievances to be redressed and supports a political solution incorporating federalism, but the onus is on the Tigers and the Government now to return to the table without posturing, he emphasized.

[1](#)4. (C) Pararajasingham indicated the LTTE and TNA are waiting for a "positive sign" from President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government. He returned often to the subject of paramilitary groups, demanding the government disarm the Karuna faction and others in order to comply with the Cease-fire Agreement (CFA). Although Sampanthan and his colleagues did not deny the Tigers have perpetrated occasional violence, they alleged the government had committed far more atrocities since the CFA was signed. (Note: Evidence compiled by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission shows that the LTTE has committed the overwhelming number of violations recorded since the CFA began.) Jaffna district MP Ponnambalam contended that the presence of armed paramilitaries and the government's unwillingness to disarm them pose the most dangerous impediment to the peace process "staying on track."

Sampanthan argued, "I don't think the LTTE has abandoned the prospect of a political solution, but they have doubts the Sri Lankan state will be able to deliver." He said the LTTE has become "impatient" with the international community for its inability to deliver the Tigers into the political mainstream through a practical arrangement such as the Interim Government Authority (ISGA) or even a viable tsunami relief joint mechanism. Ponnambalam added that in light of such "discouragement" the Tigers would not allow themselves to be militarily weakened. The LTTE is adamant that Norway remain at the center of the peace process, the MPs stressed. The Ambassador stressed that Norway's effectiveness as facilitator depended on both sides waiting to move forward towards peace.

15. (C) The DCM urged the LTTE, through the TNA, to stop giving credit to remaining elements of Sinhala extremism by such arbitrary demonstrations of authority as the arrest of three Sri Lankan policemen who ventured into Tiger-controlled area in pursuit of a British pedophile (Ref B). Releasing the policemen would be an inexpensive, positive gesture and a good public relations move. The MPs complained that Rajapaksa is focusing on his "southern consensus" but has not invited the TNA for a meeting. The Ambassador recommended that, rather than sit and complain, the TNA request a meeting with the President.

16. (C) COMMENT: TNA consonance with LTTE rhetoric is hardly surprising; the MPs have about the same freedom to express their views as the voters in LTTE-controlled territory did on election day. Like the LTTE, the TNA MPs continue to put all of the burden of moving forward with the peace process on the government (and the international community, which, in their view, should do more to pressure the government), while refusing to acknowledge Tiger responsibility for the recent uptick in violence. Their ambivalence about the future of the cease-fire and inability to show any flexibility in dealing with the government offer depressing insight into current Tiger attitudes toward the peace process. While we have little hope that the MPs will carry our message unadulterated back to Kilinochchi, it is still important to remind these apologists that we hold the Tigers, as well as the Government, responsible for upholding the CFA and advancing the peace process.

LUNSTEAD